



The Sentinel

Vol. 6 No. 11

Vietnam Veterans of America – Chapter 1002 – Wallkill Valley
P.O. box 463, Vernon, NJ 07462 - 973-271-2413

November 2019

Website: www.VVA1002.org

President: John Harrigan

1st Vice President: John Brady

Secretary: Carl Ohlson

2nd Vice President: Walt Hazelman

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FROM THE MINEFIELD:

Submitted by John Harrigan

It was a busy month for the Chapter as our members attended the Salute to Veterans at the Sussex County Fair Grounds, some members attended the Passaic County Technical School Veterans Day Ceremony, then was the DAR Breakfast where the Ladies again put on a delicious breakfast for us we had about 30 members in attendance, the following day was the Veterans Mass here at St Francis De Sales where there were about 75 or more people in attendance and afterwards we were treated to a nice meal put on by those who are going to receive Confirmation, Lastly we had a Veterans service at the Cemetery in Sparta which was attended by over 100 people and Fr Chris was nice enough to come over and do the invocation for us. Like I said it was a busy month. Thank all of you who attended and made all of these events a success.

Next up will be our annual Christmas party on Saturday December 7th at 2pm here at the Church. If you have not already signed up please let us know at this meeting so we can order the food. Like in years past the Chapter will supply the meal and you just bring what you would like to drink, a snack for your table and a desert to put out for the group. Remember we need to know the names and ages of the children who will be attending.

This will be the last newsletter of the year and there will not be a meeting in the month of December and we will resume again on January 26th.

We will continue to be here on Thursdays in December and January but will not be here on December 26th.

Have a great Holiday.

1st VICE PRESIDENT:

Submitted by John Brady

Many of you have heard about the contaminated wells at Camp Lejeune (USMC base) caused by chemicals leaching into them from various sources. Soon after contaminated wells were found to be at other military bases from similar sources as well as fire fighting foam. Various filtration means have been used to clean up these wells removing the harmful chemicals.

A new method that is still in the experimental and trial basis uses chemicals that creates plasma which actually destroys or eliminates the harmful chemicals. I'm not going to bother naming let alone trying to spell the chemical names but it does show promise. There is still more work to be done on this method such as fine tuning it to remove the chemicals and I'm sure cost will play a part especially in having it installed at military bases where needed.

Getting back to our chapter, both the DAR breakfast and the veteran's mass were well attended this year. While I was unable to attend I heard there was also a good attendance at the Veteran's Day tribute at the Veterans cemetery in Sparta.

Coming up is our meeting on Sunday Nov. 24. Also on that day the Knights of Columbus are having a pancake breakfast at St. Francis de Sales where our meetings are held. The breakfast will take place after the 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock masses.

On Saturday Dec 7 we will have our annual Christmas Party. If you plan to attend please sign up letting us know how many people will be attending with you. Be sure to include the names and ages of any children. This information is needed so we will know how much food to order and provide a gift for each child given out personally by Santa himself!

Since this will probably be the last newsletter of the year I want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.

SERVICE OFFICER:

Submitted by Skip Kays

If you want any further information, or have any suggestions you can contact me at 973 459-9392 or at skays1@embarqmail.com

This column caught my eye on November 10.

Let Us Strive to Honor Our Veterans Year-Round

Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska

Don Young is the U.S. representative for Alaska's at-large congressional district.

Every year on [Veterans Day](#), Americans across the nation wrap themselves in the flag, listen to patriotic music, and thank veterans for their service.

But when the music stops, sadly so do the expressions of gratitude to those who wore the uniform. It is said so frequently in our country that it has almost become cliché, but freedom isn't free; it has a very real cost.

Throughout our nation's history, scores of men and women have answered the call to serve so that on November 11th of every year, Americans can enjoy a burger and a cold beer while "God Bless the USA" plays repeatedly. Too often, these holiday activities are enjoyed with little or no reflection on the sacrifices of our veterans. Very frankly, our nation's veterans deserve to be thanked far more frequently than once a year.

As a veteran who experienced the transition back to civilian life first-hand, the "teach a man to fish" proverb highlights how important it is for our veterans to be equipped with practical skills to help them navigate civilian life. Countless organizations in Alaska and across the U.S. offer tools like resume building, financial education and employment workshops to veterans.

It is my great hope that organizations doing this important work can continue to expand in communities across our country. A 22-year-old veteran has the skills and knowledge to do things a 22-year-old college graduate cannot. They are highly adaptable, know how to improvise, and can overcome challenges based on years operating in some of the most hostile and stressful environments imaginable. These experiences cannot be replicated on college campuses.

As a Congress, we have made great strides in expanding employment opportunities for veterans. The HIRE Vets Act -- now signed into law -- takes important steps to incentivize businesses to hire and retain veterans. In addition to veterans' employment legislation, Congress continues to support veterans employment through its programs. This includes the House of Representatives' [Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program](#) and the [SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Congressional Gold Star Family Fellowship Program Act](#), which was recently passed by the House and would [establish a congressional fellowship](#) for Gold Star Families.

However, Congress has not always worked effectively to pass critical veterans legislation. It has

taken far too many years to pass Blue Water Navy legislation; we have only recently begun working to eliminate the widow's tax and have not done enough to combat Burn Pit illnesses that affect Post-9/11 veterans. As a Congress, we can and must do more. America's veterans aren't asking for special treatment or carve-outs; they simply want what they have earned and deserve.

At the end of the day, veterans want to know that their service and sacrifice were worth something. Too many of our veterans returned home without their friends and continue to recover from the physical and mental wounds of war. Veterans want to know that the months or even years they spent away from their loved ones was worth it. They want to know that their brothers and sisters in arms they put in the ground died for a reason. They want to know that their sacrifice mattered.

This Veterans Day, I want all veterans -- in Alaska and across the country -- to know that a grateful nation stands with them.

"Back in my day" as the stories usually start, a BCD was usually for those who couldn't hack the relatively straight forward expectations of life in the military. They were either total screw ups, or for a couple of people I knew, those who wanted to get out and did what they knew would work. There were also a lot of people who fit the bill in other ways, PO'd the wrong person (officer), etc.

Now when I read that BCD vets seek "long overdue benefits," I kind of feel like when I heard that Jimmy Carter pardoned the draft deserters who split to Canada. That was the deal then.

But . . . there are exceptions, and the following story brings some up, the tearjerkers of course, and some who just got screwed. It is not up to me as no one in authority ever asked me what I think, but a BCD should not be treated as an Honorable in all cases.

This story was written by someone who, if he was writing back in the 60's & 70's would have been waving a commie flag of some kind and hating on the military. Now he is using this issue to impugn the military wholesale, and finds no problem in putting down the current president because he is doing what previous administrations did not, but he is doing it for the "wrong" people

"Other Than Honorable?" Veterans With "Bad Paper" Seek Long Overdue Benefits

Bad Conduct Discharge On Veterans Day this year, in a nation now reflexively thankful for military service of all kinds, nearly 500,000 former service members are not included in our official expressions of gratitude.

These forgotten men and women had the misfortune to leave active duty with what's called "bad paper." That means they were discharged under conditions "other than honorable," a determination made without the benefit of consistent standards applying to personnel decisions by all military branches or even individual commanders.



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In civilian life, when a coal miner or construction worker gets fired from a hazardous job—for cursing out a supervisor, fighting with a co-worker, or engaging in other misbehavior—their loss of employment doesn't render them ineligible to receive state or federal workers compensation for a documented job-related injury or illness (like black lung or asbestosis).

When you're drummed out for misconduct in uniform, the punishment is loss of similar benefits—including Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare, disability pay, and access to GI bill programs that make higher education and housing more affordable for those who have served.

Yet, in each branch of the U.S. military, when you're drummed out for misconduct in uniform, the punishment is loss of similar benefits—including Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare, disability pay, and access to GI bill programs that make higher education and housing more affordable for those who have served.

Among those adversely affected by this disqualification are many men and women who need specialized treatment for traumatic brain injuries or PTSD which they acquired during repeated combat deployments or through military sexual assault. Soldiers who might have performed well before experiencing such physical and mental wounds often misbehave as a result of them—getting into fights, going AWOL, or abusing prescription drugs and alcohol. The result can be an “other than honorable” discharge that denies them later VA care.

A Model Marine

Consider, for example, the experience of 36-year old ex-Marine Tyson Manker, now the lead plaintiff in class action litigation handled by the Veterans Legal Service Clinic at Yale. As the *New York Times* reported last year, this lawsuit alleges that the Navy appeals board which considers “bad paper” cases “currently denies upgrades even to veterans with clear diagnoses of PTSD whose enlistments ended with a single instance of relatively minor misconduct.”

Manker is one of those veterans today, but fifteen years ago, his record was exemplary. He was the top-rated Marine in his platoon, the first promoted to corporal, and then, during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, was put in charge of his own squad.

At the end of his combat deployment, Manker was given a one-page questionnaire to screen for post-traumatic stress. As reported by the *Times*, his completed

form disclosed personal exposure “to nearly every type of trauma listed, including seeing dead civilians and Marines, killing enemy fighters and civilians, and experiencing nightmares and hyper vigilance.”

There was no follow up response from the Marines. Yet his commander acted much faster when Manker was caught smoking marijuana back in the U.S., near the end of his enlistment period. His “other than honorable” discharge, pitched him back into civilian life, with none of the social supports that VA coverage and GI bill benefits provide. That's a fate shared by 125,000 other post-9/11 veterans.

Fortunately, Manker had “supportive friends and family who cared about his well-being,” during a period of personal misfortune that included “a random, near fatal stabbing attack.” He was able to get costly private treatment for anger, depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance abused caused by PTSD. With the help of student loans, Manker put himself through college and law school, becoming a licensed attorney and business law professor in Illinois.

In 2016, he was national coordinator of Veterans for Bernie and also ran for district attorney in a heavily Republican county in rural Illinois. His platform called for greater use of court diversion programs for veterans guilty of minor crimes. He's now working on a book about the history of veterans' benefits, while awaiting a federal judge's ruling on the government's motion to dismiss his class action case.

An Unprecedented Abandonment

Manker's campaign for justice for vets with “bad paper” has been embraced by veterans' organizations like Swords to Plowshares in San Francisco, a major source of private help for former military personnel who are jobless or homeless.

A recent Swords report, found that veteran benefit disqualifications, based on bad paper discharges, now affect “6.5% of all who served since 2001, compared to 2.8% of Vietnam Era veterans and 1.7% of World War II era veterans.”

“At no point in history,” [the report notes](#), “has a greater share of veterans been denied basic services intended to care and compensate for service-related injuries.

One remedy to what Swords calls an “historically unprecedented abandonment of America's veterans” was proposed to the Obama Administration three years ago by

the Yale Law School experts now assisting Manker. They produced a legal memo arguing that “the President has the legal authority to pardon veterans with an other-than-honorable (OTH) discharge whose misconduct stemmed from undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues, including pre-existing conditions.”

Instead, during Obama’s second term, his Secretary of Defense only directed some of the DOD administrative boards that consider discharge upgrade requests to “give more liberal consideration to applications that include evidence of PTSD.”

In response to high veteran suicide rates, Donald Trump’s first Secretary of Veterans Affairs authorized the delivery of emergency mental health services for up to ninety days to veterans with other than honorable discharges.

This measure was expanded by Congress in 2018, but sponsors of that legislation and some veterans’ groups were critical of how 477,000 eligible veterans were notified of their new but limited VA access. Nationwide, less than one percent of veterans with “bad paper” initially benefited from any short-term mental health treatment.

Plus, as VA unions complained, the Administration did not seek any additional funding or staff necessary to handle the larger number of new patients who might use the program, if they could find out about it. The narrow clinical parameters of the program left VA therapists with no way to address service-related physical conditions, like chronic pain, that can trigger depression, suicidal tendencies, or substance abuse among veterans long denied VA care.

Curing Past Injustice

The current crop of Democratic presidential primary candidates are being pressed to improve on that Obama/Trump record. During his 2016 campaign for the nomination, Bernie Sanders, former chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, held a veterans’ event in Gettysburg, PA. where, according to Manker, he expressed support for using presidential pardon powers to cure the injustice of bad paper.

This time around, with four veterans in the original field of candidates, several other would-be opponents of Trump have addressed the issue. In a recent interview with *Task and Purpose*, a military affairs publication, [Mayor Pete Buttigieg declared that:](#)

“No current or former military member of the military should ever be denied mental health care period. Veterans who have service-related PTSD and currently have bad paper discharges ought to have their discharges upgraded so they can receive the VA care and benefits that we owe them. Going forward, active duty service members with a service-related behavior health issue should not receive a bad paper discharge.

At a Vote Vets forum, held in New Hampshire in September, California Senator Kamala Harris was less

specific. But she did agree that “people with PTSD tend to act out” so their misbehavior in uniform should not disqualify them from getting needed VA treatment later on.

In the meantime, the current wielder of presidential pardon power has been rattling that saber on behalf of men in uniform, whose conduct has definitely been less than honorable. Last Spring, Donald Trump pardoned Michael Behenna, an ex-army officer convicted of killing an Iraqi prisoner.

As Mark Bowden reports in *The Atlantic* this month, the White House also “asked the Justice Department to prepare pardon materials for a number of American servicemen and contractors who were charged with murder and desecration of corpses, including Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, a Navy Seal who stood accused by his own team members of fatally stabbing a teenage ISIS prisoner and shooting unarmed civilians.”

Since then, Gallagher was acquitted of murder but convicted of posing for a photo with an ISIS fighter killed during his fifth combat deployment. The top Navy brass, clearly intimidated by Trump’s personal meddling in this controversial case, ended up punishing Gallagher with a brief pay cut and a one grade reduction in rank that will reduce the amount of his pension, when he retires.

Via twitter, Trump congratulated Gallagher on his acquittal, saying: “Glad, I could help.” Unfortunately, those are not words that hundreds of thousands of vets with bad paper will be hearing anytime soon from this president, whose lawyers continue to fight Tyson Manker’s case and others like it.

The courts have 'lost patience' with VA over delay on Blue Water Navy veteran benefits

Twelve "Blue Water Navy" Vietnam veterans have died since the Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie issued a stay on processing their Agent Orange disability claims.

On Friday, the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in a lawsuit filed by a veterans nonprofit group, Military Veterans Advocacy Inc. (MVA), asking that the delay on processing those claims ends. The delay affects more than 400,000 veterans or surviving family members who could be eligible for benefits, according to VA.

"I think we won a strategic victory," MVA Executive Director John Wells told Connecting Vets after the hearing.

Wells feels confident that, at the very least, VA will not be able to extend the stay past the original date of Jan. 1. However, there's a possibility that a decision comes back from the court ending the stay even earlier.

"We'll have to wait until the decision comes out, but I think if nothing else we've prevented the secretary from going past January 1st," Wells said. "From our point of



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view that would be the worst possible outcome. It might be better but we think that would be the minimum that we would get."

Wells and MVA are optimistic — and sensed that the courts were frustrated with VA much like the veterans are.

"We felt the court had pretty much lost patience with the VA," Wells said. "We also felt they were very concerned because Mr. Procopio had been granted his benefits by that same court back in January and still hadn't received his benefits. The judges did not seem very happy about that."

The Procopio v. Wilkie Federal Circuit Court decision reversed a 1997 VA decision to deny that Blue Water veterans were exposed to Agent Orange while serving offshore of Vietnam. The Procopio decision earlier this year meant that the VA should presume veterans who served in the waters off the coast were exposed to Agent Orange at some point during their service, and as a result were eligible for related VA benefits.

Actions in response to that decision have not been taken.

However, while MVA senses the hearing was a victory, they were unsuccessful in one of their other objectives on the Hill.

"We spent a week up here meeting with members of Congress and senators. One group that out and out refuses to meet with us is the House Veterans Affairs Committee Majority staff," Wells said. "They're upset at us because we have criticized their actions in passing a bill that caused the confusion and allowed the stay that forced us to go back to court. Well, okay, fine. Don't care. They need to stop acting childish and they need to meet with us and we need to go on from there."

Claims can be submitted now

While the stay is currently expected to continue until Jan. 1 — but now no further — claims for benefits can be submitted now.

VA has said Blue Water veterans and their families are "encouraged" to submit their claims for conditions related to Agent Orange. Veterans 85 and older, or "with life-threatening illnesses" will have "priority in claims processing," VA said. So, while VA will not begin processing claims until 2020, they can still be processed and prepared before that date.

About 77,000 Blue Water veterans have previously submitted claims and been denied, VA leaders said. They must file a new claim. Eligible survivors of deceased Blue Water Navy veterans can also file claims for benefits based on their veterans' service.

A list of the diseases currently linked to Agent Orange and eligible for benefits can be found on the VA website.

Veterans who want information from the VA can call 800-827-1000.

VA to launch research initiative on toxic exposures

The Department of Veterans Affairs will launch a major research initiative in fiscal 2021 on military environmental exposures and their connection to diseases in veterans and their offspring, the VA's chief of research development said Wednesday.

VA researchers have been speaking with veterans about the environmental toxins they think encountered on the battlefield and aboard military bases, Rachel Romani told attendees at an event in Washington on prostate cancer in veterans.

As a result, VA is in the planning stages for "major investment in toxic exposures" that will "cut across all research at the VA," she said.

"[Veterans], for good reason, have been irritated with us as an organization because we have not done a lot of work — especially clinical work on — military exposures. ... A) I have apologized to them, and B) I have committed that in FY21, we are going to make major investments in toxic exposures," Romani said.

According to Romani, VA researchers are reviewing the department's current research portfolio and speaking with veterans to help determine the focus and scope of future studies. She added that she has spoken with hundreds of veterans, including at least one who convinced her that the research should examine the effects of exposures on service members' children.

"It's very hard to hear stories from veterans — the feeling of guilt — one veteran I spoke to, their daughter had a hysterectomy at age 3 wondering if it was because of his service," Romani said.

Romani was one of several speakers at a forum hosted by the nonprofit advocacy group ZERO – The End of Prostate Cancer, which is launching a campaign to spread awareness of the prevalence of prostate cancer in

veterans and promote research on screening and treatments.

Prostate cancer disproportionately affects veterans — 1 in 5 veterans can expect to develop it in their lifetimes, versus 1 in 9 in the general U.S. population — and is linked to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam veterans, but also appears in veterans of other eras.

More than 13,000 veterans are diagnosed each year with prostate cancer, and 489,000 are being treated for the disease, including 16,000 with metastatic prostate cancer, in the Veterans Health Administration, according to the group.

While research has shown that cancer rates among veterans declined slightly from 2002 to 2014, many veterans who develop cancer and those diagnosed with debilitating or fatal diseases such as Parkinson's and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, are left wondering whether environmental exposures contributed to development of their illnesses.

Potential environmental hazards in the combat zones and on U.S. military bases include the burn pits used to destroy waste in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, nerve agents from abandoned chemical munitions, cleaning solvents, radiation, depleted uranium, lead and heavy metals, synthetic chemicals found in firefighting foams and more.

"It's an incredibly broad field ... in talking to the Gulf War veterans, it's a dizzying array of potential exposures they may have had and so this is where this needs to be driven by scientists and the veterans working together," Romani said.

VA to cut union time and office space use

Union representatives at the Department of Veterans Affairs will have far more restrictions on their ability to perform union work, as the agency announced Nov. 15 that unions will have to pay for office space and equipment use and representatives will have to spend 75 percent of their time doing non-union work. Most notably, the rule change notes that the agency will not approve "taxpayer-funded union time for preparing or pursuing grievances, including arbitration, on behalf of bargaining unit employees, except where such use is otherwise authorized by law or regulation."

Under civil service law, federal unions are required to represent employees that are part of their bargaining unit in grievance proceedings, or risk having an employee report them to the Federal Labor Relations Authority for not fulfilling those requirements. For all cases of official time, representatives will have to request and receive written approval in advance.

Union officials will also have to pay rent on any supplies or spaces they wish to occupy in the future — prices for which will be released Dec. 13 — and representatives will be kicked out of those office spaces after Jan. 31, 2020, if they choose not to pay that rent.

The new rules come as a response to three union-targeting executive orders signed by President Donald Trump in May 2018, which were blocked by court challenges until very recently.

A federal appeals court ruled that, regardless of whether the orders contradict the intent of Congress and overstep executive power, the courts did not have the authority to rule on the case until it had been brought through the FLRA on an agency-by-agency basis.

In the meantime, administration leaders have argued that official time is a waste of taxpayer money, while unions state that it promotes efficient functioning of government by giving employees an avenue to voice what is wrong with the agency. "Common sense dictates that VA employees' main focus should be providing Veterans the best possible care, benefits and customer service. At the same time, unions using VA facilities should have to pay their fair share," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie in a news release. "These executive orders will help ensure that's the case."

Union officials reported chaos when agencies, including the VA, first moved to enforce the executive orders in July 2018, before a federal judge placed an injunction on such enforcement. The American Federation of Government Employees reported at that time that union representatives and other employees were having to coordinate break times just to talk about ongoing or potential grievances without doing so on the clock.

AFGE National VA Council President Alma Lee called the rules changes an illegal violation of civil service law: "This is a punitive and illegal action that's intended to silence employees and discourage them from reporting mismanagement or other abuses that harm veterans' care. We will pursue any and all legal options at the national and local levels to challenge this illegal activity and preserve employees' collective bargaining rights."

According to the agency, the changes will help save the taxpayers money, by either generating revenue from rent-paying unions or freeing up space for other uses. The change would also move union representatives "back to direct services and medical care." But union officials have argued that the problems with care at the VA are more attributable to significant staffing shortages at the agency that were exacerbated by a Trump administration hiring freeze, rather than union representatives taking official time while at work.

WOMEN VETERANS:

Submitted by Walt Hazelman

No report.



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POW/MIA:

Submitted by Bob Gilbert

- 10/17/19: Pfc. Quentin McCall, U.S. Marine Corps. Company I, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, Lost 11/23/1943, Tarawa.
- 10/17/19: 2nd Lt. Earl Ferguson, U.S. Army Air Forces, 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), 8th Air Force, Lost 8/1/1943, Romania.
- 10/22/2019: Sgt. James E. Smith, Jr., U.S. Army Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, Lost 11/25/1950, North Korea. NOTE: Following the war, several returned American prisoners of war reported that Smith had died in January 1951, in the vicinity of Pukchin-Tarigol, a temporary prisoner of war.
- 10/25/2019: Pvt. Channing Whitaker, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force Lost 11/22/1943, Tarawa. NOTE: Landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Whitaker died on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943. He was reported to have been buried in the East Division Cemetery, which was eventually renamed Cemetery #33.
- 10/25/2019: Cpl. William L. Brown, U.S. Army Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, Lost 12/2/1950, North Korea.
- 10/25/2019: Pvt. William Hedtke, U.S. Army, Battery B, 319th Glider Artillery Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, Lost 9/18/1944, The Netherlands.
- 10/29/2019: Sgt. Jerome B. Morris, U.S. Marine Corps, Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, Lost 11/22/1943, Tarawa.
- 10/29/2019: Pvt. Porfirio Franco, U.S. Army, 200th Coast Artillery Regiment, Lost 7/18/1942, Philippines. NOTE: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Pvt. Porfirio C. Franco, Jr., 22, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who was captured and died in captivity during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 10, 2019.
In 1942, Franco was a member of the 200th Coast Artillery Regiment, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942.
Thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members were captured and interned at POW camps. Franco was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor and held at the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the war.
According to prison camp and other historical records, Franco died July 18, 1942, and was buried along with other deceased prisoners in the local Cabanatuan Camp Cemetery, in common grave number 312.
Following the war, American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) personnel exhumed those buried at the Cabanatuan cemetery and relocated the remains to a temporary U.S. military mausoleum near Manila. In late 1947, the AGRS examined the remains in an attempt to identify them. Due to the circumstances of the POW deaths and burials, the extensive commingling, and the limited identification technologies of the time, all of the remains could not be individually identified. The unidentified remains were interred as “unknowns” in the present-day Manila American Cemetery and Memorial.
In January 2018, 23 “unknown” remains associated with Common Grave 312 were disinterred and sent to the DPAA laboratory for analysis, including one set, designated X-2841 Manila Cemetery #2.
To identify Franco’s remains, scientists from DPAA used dental and anthropological analysis as well as circumstantial and material evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) analysis.

DPAA is grateful to the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and the United States Army for their partnership in this mission.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died during the war. Currently there are 72,648 service members still unaccounted for from World War II with approximately 30,000 assessed as possibly recoverable. Franco's name is recorded on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, an ABMC site along with others missing from WWII. Although interred as an "unknown" in Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Franco's grave was meticulously cared for over the past 70 years by the ABMC. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

For family information, contact the Army Service Casualty Office at (800) 892-2490.

The date and location for Franco's funeral have yet to be determined. For future funeral information, visit www.dpaa.mil.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for Americans who went missing while serving our country, visit the DPAA website at www.dpaa.mil, find us on social media at www.facebook.com/dodpaa or call (703) 699-1420/1169.

Franco's personnel profile can be viewed at <https://dpaa.secure.force.com/dpaaProfile?id=a0Jt0000000Xi2OEAS>

- 10/30/2019: Seaman 2nd Class Everett Windle, U.S. Navy, USS Oklahoma, Lost 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor.
- 10/30/2019: Coxswain Layton Banks, U.S. Navy, USS Oklahoma, Lost 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor.
- 10/30/2019: Fireman 1st Class, Bethel Walters, U.S. Navy. USS West Virginia, Lost 12/7/194, Pearl Harbor.
- 10/31/2019: Sgt. William C. Holmes, U.S. Army, Heavy Tank Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, Lost 9/21/1951, North Korea. NOTE: In 1951, Holmes was a member of Heavy Tank Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. On Sept. 21, 1951, his unit participated in a patrol located near the Iron Triangle, North Korea. After a prolonged firefight, Holmes was killed in action. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. On Nov. 1, 1951, an unidentified set of remains, designated X-2162, were turned over to the 19th Infantry Regiment's collection point. The remains could not be identified and were subsequently buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu. In 2018, DPAA disinterred X-2162 and

accessioned the remains to the laboratory. To identify Holmes' remains, scientists from DPAA used anthropological and chest radiograph comparison analysis, as well as circumstantial and material evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) analysis.

Today, 7,607 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Korean War. Using modern technology, identifications continue to be made from remains that were previously returned by Korean officials, recovered from Korea by American recovery teams, or disinterred from unknown graves.

Holmes' name is recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the Punchbowl along with the others who are missing from the Korean War. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

- 11/1/2019: Machinist's Mate 1st Class, Paul H. Gebser, U.S. Naval Reserve, USS Oklahoma, Lost 9/21/1951, Pearl Harbor.
- 11/1/2019: Seaman 2nd Class, Lloyd R. Timm, U.S. Navy, USS Oklahoma, Lost 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor
- 11/1/2019: Ensign, Frances C. Flaherty, U.S. Naval Reserve, USS Oklahoma, Lost 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor.
- 11/4/2019: Cpl. Thomas H. Cooper, U.S. Marine Corps, Company A, 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, Lost 11/20/1943, Tarawa.
- 11/4/2019: Pvt. Horace H. Middleton, U.S. Army, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), Lost 7/12/1944, Burma.
- 11/4/2019: Cpl. Earl W. Duncan, U.S. Army, Company D, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team, Lost 12/2/1950, North Korea. NOTE: In late 1950, Duncan was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. On July 27, 2018, following the summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un in June 2018, North Korea turned over 55 boxes, purported to contain the remains of American service members killed during the Korean War. The remains arrived at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii on Aug. 1, 2018, and were



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subsequently accessioned into the DPAA laboratory for identification.

- 11/6/2019: Fireman 3rd Class Herbert B. Jacobson, U. S. Navy, USS Oklahoma, Lost 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor.
- 11/7/2019: Cpl. Leon E. Clevenger, U.S. Army, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, Lost 7/11/1950, South Korea. NOTE: In the summer of 1950, Clevenger was an infantryman with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 11, 1950, while involved in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army in the vicinity of Chonui and Choch'iwon, South Korea. The Army amended his status to deceased in December 1953 when there was no updated information regarding his status.

In November 1951, a U.S. Army Graves Registration Team recovered the remains of an unidentified American near the village of Kalgori, approximately three miles from Clevenger's last known location. The remains were taken to the United States Military Cemetery Tangkok for possible identification, and were later sent to the Central Identification Unit at Kokura, Japan, as Unknown X-2258 Tangkok for further processing. The remains, which could not be identified, were subsequently buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu.

In December 2018, the Department of Defense disinterred X-2258 and sent the remains to the DPAA laboratory for analysis.

To identify Clevenger's remains, scientists from DPAA used dental and anthropological analysis, as well as circumstantial and material evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) analysis.

DPAA is grateful to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of the Army for their partnership in this mission.

Today, 7,606 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Korean War. Using modern technology,

identifications continue to be made from remains that were previously returned by Korean officials, recovered from Korea by American recovery teams, or disinterred from unknown graves. Clevenger's name is recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the Punchbowl along with the others who are missing from the Korean War. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

AGENT ORANGE:

Submitted by Owen Martin

Are Vietnam Veterans the Only Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange?

Vietnam veterans are not the only veterans who were exposed to [Agent Orange](#) during their service. The VA maintains a [list of military operations and time periods](#) during which the military used Agent Orange. Veterans who served in any of these capacities may apply for and be eligible to receive VA disability benefits for medical conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure.

Military Operations That Involved Agent Orange

Agent Orange is a [defoliant](#) and herbicide used by the U.S. military during the 1960s and 1970s. Agent Orange's primary use was to defoliate forests and cut off the food sources of enemy soldiers.

The most common [use of Agent Orange](#) was during the Vietnam War, between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. However, the VA also presumes you were exposed to Agent Orange if you served in any of the following locations:

- Anywhere in the Korean Demilitarized Zone between April 1, 1968, and August 31, 1971.
- In a C-123 aircraft used by the military to spray Agent Orange after the Vietnam War, due to the possibility of coming into contact with residue.

If your military records show that you served in one of these locations during the specified timeframes, you are entitled to a presumption of exposure.

Showing a Connection Between Agent Orange and Your Medical Condition

The VA does not offer benefits on the basis of Agent Orange exposure alone. You must also have one of the following presumptive conditions:

- AL Amyloidosis
- Chronic B-cell Leukemias

- Chloracne
- [Diabetes Mellitus Type 2](#)
- [Hodgkin's Disease](#)
- [Ischemic Heart Disease](#)
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Parkinson's Disease
- [Peripheral Neuropathy](#), Early-Onset
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers ([lung cancer](#), larynx cancer, trachea cancer, bronchus cancer)
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas

If you have a condition that is not on this list, your lawyer can review your service and medical records to try and help you build a strong case that your exposure to [Agent Orange caused your condition](#).

COMMUNITY/PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

Submitted by Lou Storms

On November 12th, myself, John Fedynich, Ken Geer, Bob Cubby and Vinnie Perratore took our bi-monthly trip to Lyons VA Hospital to serve dinner to the In-Patient PTSD Unit and the 3rd Floor Ladies Unit. Again the food was supplied by ShopRite of West Milford. We had a really nice visit with the vets and they enjoyed the food to the last bite!

Our next trip will be on January 14th. Anyone wanting to join us must sign the sheet up front or contact me at 973-728-3859, as a list of all those attending must be supplied to the VA prior to our visit.

Myself and Bob Cubby will be making another trip to Lyons before Christmas to deliver donations from the Sparta Woman's Club. The ladies presented Bob with 31 Handmade Crocheted Lap Blankets, plush Throws and Blankets, Scarves, knitted wheel chair bags and personal items, for the Hospitalized Veterans at Lyons. They also included almost 200 Holiday Cards for the Vets. Thank you to the Ladies of the Sparta Woman's Club for their generous gifts for the Vets.

Scheduled Meetings:

Meetings are held at 2:00 p.m. the 4th Sunday of each month unless otherwise **noted**.

2019

24th November

7th December (Christmas Party)

2020

16th January

23rd February

22nd March

26th April

24th May

28th June

26th July

23rd August

27th September

25th October

22nd November

5th December – Christmas Party

Calendar of Events:

Visit www.VVA1002.org for information on upcoming events.

7th December – Christmas Party at St. Francis de Sales Church at 14:00 (2:00 P.M.)

NEW MEMBERS:

“WELCOME HOME”

Denise Hazelman-Hatch

PASSINGS:

No report.

Homeless Committee (new):

Submitted by John Drinkard

Samaritan Inn

24 Hour Emergency Hotline / Motel Shelter
973-940-8869

Samaritan Inn provides emergency food and temporary shelter to homeless families in Sussex County as well as a program of counseling and skill building in family maintenance and growth. Call the Samaritan Inn for emergency assistance of food and shelter. Samaritan Inn is the only shelter service that responds on a 24 hour / 7 days a week basis. The hotline is available during evening hours, weekends and holidays to arrange safe shelter for families experiencing a sudden homeless emergency until Sussex County Social Services and Samaritan Inn's offices are open for regular business hours.

The goal of Samaritan Inn Emergency Hotline/ Motel Shelter Program is to provide one night of safe haven, until other services can be accessed. This program also helps to decrease mental health concerns in clients by reducing fears and anxieties through providing emergency shelter. The emergency hotline/ motel program is a multiple service provider for emergencies, consultation, community case management, and a referral source for community members.



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Samaritan Inn will also provide supportive guidance, information and referrals to link callers to services. The agency will continue collaborative teamwork with resource agencies to engage chronic clients in appropriate services to meet their long term needs, and end dependence on emergency services.

Samaritan Inn

901 Swartswood Road

Newton, New Jersey 07860

973-940-8872

www.samaritaninn.org

CONGRATULATIONS/CONCERNS:

Happy December Anniversaries:

Kathy & Lenny Weakland

Audrey & Jerry Magnus

MEMBERS CORNER:

1. *Submitted by* William Gardner

The final tally for wreath donations for the NNJVMC. We had 130 wreath donations thru our Wallkill Valley Chapter Wreaths Across America. If you could put this in the Chapter News Letter we would appreciate for November meeting. All wreaths for the cemetery for the December 14th Wreaths Across America Service and Wreath Laying have been raised for all of our burials there

2. *Submitted by* Owen Martin

How Often Does VA Reevaluate Disability Ratings?

- **What is a VA Re-Examination and Reevaluation?**

A VA re-examination is a medical examination used to reevaluate the severity of your service-connected disability. After you are initially awarded disability benefits, VA will evaluate whether your disability is such that you ought to be scheduled for a future re-examination to determine if your benefits need to be adjusted. The types of service-connected disabilities that are most likely subject to reevaluation include those that can be expected to improve over time. VA is required to send you advance notice of the need for a re-examination. It is very important for you to show up for this examination.

If you fail to attend, and do not call to reschedule or explain why you are unable to make it, then it is likely that VA will reduce or terminate your disability benefits.

- **When Does VA Reevaluate Your Service-Connected Disability?**

VA usually reevaluates veterans' service-connected disabilities on two occasions:

- Six months after leaving military service; and
- Between two and five years from the date of the decision to grant VA disability benefits.

The purpose of reevaluation is to verify either the continued existence and/or the current severity of a service-connected condition. VA will also require reevaluation in cases where it is likely that a veteran's disability has improved, such that there is evidence indicating there has been a material change in a disability or that the current rating percentage is incorrect. If there is a significant improvement to the veteran's health, VA may choose to assign a lower disability rating, thereby lowering the amount of monthly compensation the veteran receives. VA may also determine that a disease or disability no longer exists, and discontinue benefits. Cancer is a common example of a service-connected disability that requires reevaluation as the result of material improvement. Specifically, if a veteran's service-connected cancer goes into remission, it is likely that VA will reevaluate the condition and assign a new disability rating based on any residuals. However, if VA decreases your benefits based on the reevaluation of your condition, you have the right to request an increase if your condition worsens again.

- **VA Rating Reductions**

Under certain conditions, VA may reduce your disability rating. However, there are specific rules VA must follow when issuing rating reductions. A proposed rating reduction (as well as a final decision) must be based on a review of the veteran's entire medical history. VA must show that there has been an actual change in the disability since the last Rating Decision, and that such a change reflects material improvement in the veteran's ability to function under the ordinary conditions and stressors of life and work.

- **What Happens If You Receive Notice of a Proposed Rating Reduction?**

VA is required to send a letter proposing the reduction of your benefits if the decrease will affect the amount of monthly compensation you receive. The letter

is not a final VA decision, so it cannot be appealed, but VA is required to give you the opportunity to respond to the proposal by submitting evidence and/or attending a hearing. From the date of VA's letter, you have 60 days to submit evidence if you believe the reduction is not warranted. Within the first 30 days of the 60-day period, you also have the option to request a hearing to be conducted by VA personnel unrelated to the proposed reduction. VA must consider evidence you submit during this period along with all previous evidence and medical records associated with your file.

- **When Are Veterans Protected from Reevaluations and Rating Reductions?**

Typically, VA will not reevaluate or re-schedule a re-examination for your service-connected disability under the following conditions, however, there may be exceptions on a case-by-case basis:

- You are over the age of 55.
- You have a stabilized rating (5 years or more). Any rating that has remained at the same level for 5 years or longer is considered "stabilized." In order to reevaluate stabilized ratings, VA must show sustained improvement. VA cannot use just one re-examination to show sustained improvement. Rather, it must show through medical records as well as the re-examination that you are not just temporarily experiencing improvement. Or, VA must show that the evidence in your file predominantly demonstrates sustained improvement.
- You have a total disability rating (100%). VA can reevaluate and reduce a total rating if there is evidence of material improvement in your condition. Here, VA must provide evidence that your condition has improved such that there has been an observable change in your ability to function under the conditions of daily life.
- You have a permanent disability. If you have a disability that is considered permanent in nature, this means that VA is reasonably certain, based on medical evidence, that the level of impairment will continue for the rest of your life with zero or close to zero chance of improvement.
- You have a continuous rating for 20 years or more. Conditions that have been rated at or above a certain rating level for 20 years or more are considered "continuous". VA cannot reevaluate or reduce a continuous rating below the original level it was assigned.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. **Special Note: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call (toll free 24/7) 1-800-273-8255 and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.**

2. Jackets (\$60 (summer) & \$70 (winter)); t-shirts (\$15); hats (\$10); golf shirts (short sleeve \$28; long sleeve \$33) are still available. See Owen Martin for purchases or to place an order (pre-payment for orders are appreciated)
3. Important note to families of deceased veterans, and/or requestors: *Submitted by Bob Caggiano*
It is the right of every deceased Veteran to have a Military honors team attend the graveside service, to present the Flag at no charge to the family. Honors Teams are sent out, at the expense of the US Government.

In January 2000, Congress passed legislation guaranteeing Veterans the right to at least two uniformed servicemen, a flag ceremony, and the playing of TAPS at their funeral. Unfortunately, there are not enough buglers to play TAPS, so the historic melody has been played on a CD player at many Veterans' last ceremony, or more currently on a bugle that plays Taps using an electronic insert. The volunteer organization "Bugles Across America" (a.k.a. BAA) was created to honor the service of veterans by providing Taps live by a bugler using a real instrument (such as a bugle, trumpet, cornet, or flugelhorn) at funerals or any other ceremony requiring a bugler. There are currently over 7500 volunteer buglers nationwide in all 50 states, and some overseas who stand ready to serve. BAA volunteers perform Taps as a free service.

As a Vietnam era veteran member of VVA Chapter 1002 and a BAA volunteer bugler, I am available to play for anyone who needs a bugler for Taps (or other appropriate bugle calls) for any honorable discharged veteran or related military ceremony. In the event I cannot play because of a scheduling conflict, I can generally still provide a substitute bugler so please contact me - Bob Caggiano, USAF Veteran, (973) 222-7591 (cell) or FinalTaps@gmail.com.



Editors Corner:

By Linda Skellenger (AVVA)

Please have information to be included in the January newsletter to me by Sunday, January 19th by email: skelle@ptd.net or by snail-mail to:

Linda Skellenger
174 Lewisburg Rd.
Sussex, N.J. 07461